

AN
INQUIRY

INTO THE
MIRACLE

Said to have been wrought in the
FIFTH CENTURY

Upon some

Orthodox Christians,

In confirmation of the

Doctrine of the TRINITY,

Who continued to speak clearly and distinctly,
after their Tongues had been cut out by order
of Hunneric, an *Arian*, King of the Vandals.

In a LETTER to a Friend.

L O N D O N,

Printed, and Sold by J. Roberts in Warwick-Lane,
M.DCC.XXX. (Price 1 s.)

AN
INQUIRY

INTO THE

MIRACLES

Said to have been wrought in the

FIFTH CENTURY

Upon Rome

Orthodox Christians

In confirmation of the

Doctrine of the Trinity

Also continued to the sixth century and divided
into three volumes. It has been out of order
since the first volume, being of the Vandalic

In a Letter to a Friend

LONDON

Printed and sold by R. B. in Warwick-Lane.

MDCCLXX. (1750)



THE PREFACE.

THE following Letter was written at my request, as the learned author of it has truly represented. That surprising miracle said to be wrought in the fifth century, in confirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity, always appear'd to me so different in several respects from any of those recorded in the sacred writings, which were done either by Christ, or his apostles; that I was very desirous to get a more particular account of it, and to see upon what historical evidence the truth of it depends. But not being in a proper situation for this myself, I was obliged to apply to a friend, and desire him to send me a full and impartial account of it from all those authors, who lived at or near the time.

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~~One~~ have mentioned it in their writings. He was so kind as to undertake the task, and I have the greatest reason to believe has executed it with the same unprejudiced view, that I had myself, when I requested it of him. And 'tis from this persuasion I now venture to make it public, that every one, who will be at the pains to read this Letter, may be able to judge of the credibility of the fact, and how far it ought in reason to demand his assent.

I HOPE I may be allowed to say, without any suspicion of a design to prepossess others in their opinion, that the evidence appears to me far short, of what one might justly expect in so extraordinary a case. Besides, the nature of the miracle is so singular, without any suitable effects consequent upon it (which will appear by the Letter) as to me renders it very suspicious. Nor am I better satisfied with the reasons, that have been assigned for it. Dr. Berryman gives us two: for he says it was partly done for the conviction of such of the Arians, who

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who were not harden'd beyond remedy; and partly for the greater support of the orthodox under that severe trial^r. But as to the former of these reasons, 'tis observable, that both parties profess'd themselves Christians; and that the dispute between them did not relate to the truth of the Christian revelation in general, in opposition to any other scheme of religion; but only to the sense of a particular doctrine. Now our Saviour has not only taught us, that when persons have the advantage of a divine revelation once settled and established among them, they have no reason to expect new miracles for the confirmation of any part of it; but likewise that miracles in such a case would be ineffectual to those, who will not attend to the evidence already given them. This, I think, is plainly intimated in the parable of the rich man, who is there represented as being in a state of torment after death, and desiring Abraham to send Lazarus from the state of happy spirits into this world to warn his

See the Doctor's words more at large in the Letter, p. 12.

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brethren, who were yet living, and prevent their coming into the same miserable state with himself. To whom Abraham replies : They have Moses and the prophets. And again : If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho one rose from the dead^a. The certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments is a doctrine of the last importance to mankind ; and yet our Saviour lets us know by this parable, that the writings of Moses and the prophets were not only sufficient, but, if duly attended to, better suited to convince men of the truth of it, than a miracle would be. And if so, I do not apprehend, what reason we have to suppose a miracle should be wrought in the case before us, to convince the Arians of their error, who enjoyed the Christian revelation, and owned its divine authority. As to the other reason alleged by the Doctor, Christians are no where taught, that I know of, in the sacred writings, to expect miracles for the confirmation of their faith under sufferings. The reward of perfect and

^a Luke XVI. 29, 31.

eternal

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eternal happiness in a future life, and divine assistances in this, proportion'd to their trials; are often promised them for their encouragement; and there had been before that time almost innumerable instances of such Christians, who from those motives only, without any fresh miracles for their support, had undergone the most cruel tortures, that either barbarous men could invent, or human nature suffer. I therefore see as little reason to suppose a miracle should be wrought on this account, as on the former. And indeed both these suppositions may possibly be thought by some to look too much like impeaching the Christian religion, as not sufficient to answer some of the main ends, for which it was designed, and which it declares to have in view: that is, to give us a clear and perfect rule of every thing, that is necessary for us to believe and practise; and to furnish us with all proper motives to constancy in the profession of it. For to suppose a miracle wrought to decide a controversy between Christians, relating to any doctrine revealed in the sacred scriptures, may seem
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to charge the revelation, in that point at least, as not sufficiently clear; since it can't reasonably be thought, the divine being should interpose in so extraordinary a method, where it is not necessary. And on the other hand, to suppose the like in order to confirm the minds of good and pious men under any severe trials, to which they may be exposed, may seem to represent Christianity as deficient in its motives to steadiness and sincerity in a state of persecution.

THE author of the Letter has not only cited the testimonies of the several writers, upon whose authority the truth of this miracle depends; but has likewise endeavour'd to account for the rise of the story, and that in a manner which to me appears not improbable. But tho it may be very difficult, if not perhaps impossible, to determine that with any certainty at such a distance of time; this can be no reason why the thing itself should be credited, if the evidence, on which it rests, be not sufficient to support the truth of it.

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THE violent attacks, which have been made of late upon the Christian religion, by a variety of methods, very much heighten'd my desire to get the best information I could with respect to this miracle. For, I think, it can be of no real service to the cause of Christianity at any time, and more especially at such seasons, to insist upon any arguments in defense either of the whole, or any particular doctrine, which will not bear the strictest scrutiny and examination. Its avowed enemies are always ready to lay hold of every thing, that appears weak or dubious, which they greatly improve to its disadvantage, by endeavouring to persuade ignorant and unguarded persons, that all other arguments brought to support it are alike indefensible. But as the contrary to this is evident, and its divine original and certainty are capable of being evinc'd from such reasons, as have been hitherto, and, I doubt not, ever will be sufficient to baffle the greatest art and subtlety of its worst enemies; it were to be wish'd, the true friends of it would not make use of any other in its defense;

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defense ; but follow the example of the Roman orator in Tully, who, as he tells us, chose rather to weigh his arguments, than number them^a. But whether my sentiments of this miracle are just, or not, will best appear by perusing the account of it in the Letter itself ; to which I shall now dismiss the reader.

^a Cic. De orat. L. II. c. 76.



ERRATA.

Pag. 28. l. 21. read 3, 7: p. 43. l. 23. *Ναδρῶντα*.

Dear



Dear Sir,

YOU can't but remember, that some time ago, when the subject of our conversation happen'd to be the miracles, which are said to have been wrought after the apostles days, you mention'd that very remarkable one of the fifth century, in defense of the ever blessed Trinity ; and at the same time desir'd me to make what inquiry I could into the proof there is for this fact, and examine the nature of the evidence brought to support it. This I have done, and now send you my thoughts freely on that subject, which I submit to your judgment.

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THERE are many persons, I know, who, if they were to read these papers, in which I argue against the authority alleged for this miracle as insufficient, would think that by so doing I shew'd myself an *Arian* ; and that I denied there ever was such a miracle, because it is a plain proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. But were any persons to say this to me, I should only ask them, whether they thought the augurs and soothsayers among the Romans could by their art foretel events ; and if they denied it, I think I might with equal reason tell them, they did so because they were *atheists* ; it being an argument much used by the Stoics to prove the existence of a Deity *. For I can't perceive, that we are any more obliged to give in to every argument advanced by Christian divines, in proof of a particular arti-

* Quid haruspicum ars, nonne divina ? Hæc innumera-
rabilia ex eodem genere qui videat, nonne cogatur confiteri
esse Deos ? Quorum enim interpretes sunt, eos ipsos esse
negasse est : Deorum autem interpretes sunt : Deos igitur
esse fateamur. Cic. De nat. Deor. L. II. c. 4.

cle of reveal'd religion ; than we are to all the arguments of the antient philosophers, in defense of some point of natural religion. The force of the evidence, with which it is attended, ought certainly in both cases equally to determine us. But I know there is no likelihood of your being led into so weak a manner of judging. I think every argument brought to prove the Christian religion in general, or any doctrines it reveals to us, ought diligently to be examined ; nor indeed ought any argument to be used, which will not stand the test of the most nice and strict examination : for I make no doubt, but infidelity has been sometimes promoted even by the friends of Christianity, who have laid too great a stress on weak arguments ; or endeavoured to support their notions by groundless reports of miracles, which have upon inquiry been found to be fictitious. When such arguments are used, and such stories insisted on, men are apt to conclude, that those who act in that manner, are either very weak or design-

ing persons; and that the religion they thus attempt to defend, is false and unreasonable.

I SHALL premise an observation or two in general upon the miracles said to be wrought since the time of the apostles, before I come to consider that particular miracle, which I intend chiefly for the subject of my present inquiry.

It is thought by some learned men, that a power of working miracles continued in the church some centuries after our Saviour's ascension. And from Tertulian^a, Minucius Felix^b, Origen^c, and

^a Edatur hic aliquis sub tribunalibus vestris, quem dæmone agi constet; jussus a quolibet Christiano loqui spiritus ille, tam se dæmonem confitebitur de vero, quam alibi Deum de falso. *And in the same chapter, speaking of those devils, he says: Etiam de corporibus nostro imperio excidunt inviti. Apolog. c. 23. Vid. etiam Ad Scap. c. 2, et 4.*

^b Hæc omnia sciunt plerique ipsos dæmonas de semet ipsis confiteri, quoties a nobis tormentis verborum et orationis incendiis de corporibus exiguntur. Cap. 23.

^c Ἐξ ἐπαύρου δαίμονας, καὶ πολλὰς ἰάσεις ὀνητεῖται, καὶ ἑρῶσι πᾶσι καὶ τὸ βέλμα τῷ λόγῳ ἐκείνων. *Contra Cels. p. 34.*

Lactantius^a, one might imagine a power of miracles was granted to most Christians in those times. And some perhaps may think, that what our Saviour said to his disciples a little before his ascension, related to such a power, which was to be continued for some time: *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*^b. These words are general, and seem to imply, that those who believed in Christ, from the preaching of his apostles, should have a

^a Justos autem, id est, cultores Dei metuunt. Cujus nomine adjurati de corporibus excedunt. Inst. Lib. II. c. 15.

^b Mark xvi. 15, &c.

power of *casting out devils*, of *speaking with new tongues*, &c. That these powers were in the apostles days distributed to Christians by the Spirit, is very plain and certain : for the apostle Paul says, *To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues*^a. So that we must not understand St. Mark, as if every Christian was to have every one of those powers confer'd on him ; but that such powers should be among them distributed severally, as the Holy Spirit should see convenient. Some have supposed those words ought to be so far restrained, as to contain only a promise to those, who should believe upon the preaching of the apo-

^a 1 Corinth. xii. 8, &c.

stles ; but I am inclined to think, a power
 of working miracles lasted longer than
 those times : but how long it continued
 is, I believe, very difficult to determine ;
 nor shall I at present enquire. I shall on-
 ly say in general, that while paganism
 continued to be the establish'd religion
 thro' the Roman empire, such discoveries
 of a divine power attending the propaga-
 tion of the gospel among the heathen
 appear to me much more easy to be ac-
 counted for, than afterward, when Chri-
 stianity became the public religion, and
 had the protection of the civil power.
 Miracles said to be done after this, and
 among Christians, should in my appre-
 hension be very cautiously used, as an
 argument for the truth of the Christian
 religion, and more especially for the
 proof of any particular doctrine ; for
 there are most certainly in the fathers,
 and ecclesiastical historians, many idle
 and absurd stories, which I am sure no
 prudent and considerate protestant can
 believe. The church of Rome indeed
 defends the greatest superstition and ido-
 latry

latry from writers of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, who have related miracles, which seem to favour and countenance their practices. Whoever will read Bellarmine's treatise, *De reliquiis et imaginibus sanctorum*, will see many authorities taken from the antients, such as Epiphanius, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, and others, for several miracles effected by the graves and relics of saints. The famous story of our Saviour's cross being found by Helena, the mother of Constantin, and the miracles done by it, which are related by Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, Paulinus, Ruffinus, Sulp. Severus, Socrates, Sozomen, and others, have been the foundation of the ridiculous respect paid to some bits of wood, which they say are parts of it, as likewise to other crosses. The worship of the Virgin Mary is defended by popish writers, from stories of her appearing often; and the doctrine of purgatory they pretend to prove from apparitions, which declar'd they came from thence. But altho these things, and
 others

others of the like nature, are justly exploded by all protestants ; yet from hence to deride the fathers, and ridicule the study of their writings, as if they were guilty of forgery, and consequently designing men, seems to me a hasty way of judging. For my part, I had rather esteem them weak and over credulous in some things, than wicked. Tho indeed the believing a story without foundation does not always argue so great a weakness of judgment, as may be imagined ; provided that story, if true, would be a confirmation of some favourite doctrine, or a good argument against the opinion of others : for there is generally in men a great fondness for a doctrine, which they have once espoused, and especially if it be made a party distinction. And it has frequently happen'd, that those, who in other respects have appear'd to be men of a great strength of genius, and soundness of judgment, have too hastily given into what, if true, would confirm a favourite opinion ; and have made use of trifling and weak arguments

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to support it. This might be the case with some of the fathers, who without due examination might credit some things, which favour'd their notions; especially when they were oppos'd by others: and 'tis well known, that nothing ever met with greater opposition in the antient church, than the doctrine of the Trinity; in proportion to which the bias must be so much the stronger for hearkning to any thing, that might serve to defend it. And therefore both here, and in all such cases, where the arguments depend upon facts, the stronger prejudices they appear to have lain under, who report them, the greater evidence may justly be expected.

THESE things I thought proper to premise concerning the miracles in general, said to be wrought after the apostles days, by way of introduction to what I have to say concerning that remarkable one of some Christians speaking without tongues. This deserves the more to be enquir'd into, because it has been credit-
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ed by so many eminent men of learning and great sense, and made use of by some as an unanswerable argument for the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. The learned Grotius mentions it, among other miracles, as a proof of a providence, in his excellent treatise, *De veritate religionis Christianæ* ^a. It is also mentioned by the Magdeburg historians, by Baronius, by Spanheim, and others. And it has been lately very much insisted on by the learned Dr. Berryman, in his *Historical account of the Trinitarian controversy* ^b.

THAT you may have a clear account of this matter, I shall in the first place give you the history it self, as it is very well related by Dr. Berryman ; and then

^a Vide et de iis, qui exsecta ob religionem lingua locuti, testes certissimos. Justinian. l. 1. C. de off. præf. præt. Afr. Procopium Vandalic. Lib. 1. Victorem Vitensem Lib. De persecut. Ænæam Gazæum, Theophrast. L. 1. c. 17. in not.

^b Eight sermons preached at lady Moyer's lecture : printed in the year 1725.

make a remark or two upon the miracle; and after that I shall consider separately the authorities, which are brought to support it.

THE DOCTOR in his *sixth Sermon* is giving an account of the state of *Arianism* in Africa, under king Hunneric; who about the year 484 persecuted the orthodox in a very severe and cruel manner, banishing, enslaving, or murdering several thousands. At which time, says the Doctor, *God was pleased to work divers miracles, as well for the conviction of such, as were not harden'd beyond remedy; as for the greater support of his faithful servants under that severe trial, to which they were exposed. Among the rest there is none more considerable, than that of the clergy and inhabitants of Typasa in Mauritania; who when they could not be prevailed with to profess Arianism, and be rebaptized (as was the common practice of the Arians at that time) but continued to celebrate the praises of Christ, as consubstantial with*

with the Father, had their tongues cut to the roots by the command of Hunneric ; and then, by a surprizing instance of God's good providence, they were enabled to speak articulately and distinctly without their tongues ; and so continuing to make open profession of the same doctrine, they became not only the preachers, but living witnesses of its truth.

As to the nature of this miracle, it seems to me much greater, than any we read of in the gospels wrought by our Saviour, or which are afterward said to be wrought by the apostles. When they work'd miracles on human bodies, which wanted any faculty, their way was to restore the organ to its proper exercise. When a dumb person was cur'd by our Saviour, he loos'd the string of his tongue^a, but did not give him the faculty of speech without a tongue. We don't read that he gave men sight, who had no eyes, or made them capable of seeing in any other than the natural man-

^a Mark vii. 35.

ner^a; or that a man with a wither'd hand was made to use it, till it was restor'd whole as the other^b. And we find, that the apostles afterward followed the example of their great master, upon the like occasions. But in the miracle we are speaking of, there was a faculty restor'd without the organ. A miracle indeed of miracles! Had new tongues been immediately form'd in their mouths, the thing would not have appear'd to me half so wonderful; for every time they spake, as they wanted the organ^c of speech, a new miracle was wrought. It is hardly perhaps worth mentioning, that possibly two of these persons spake miraculously to very ill purposes; who, as Dr. Berryman says, *for the immorality of their practices were punish'd by divine providence with the loss of that extraordinary favour, which had been bestow'd on them for the orthodoxy of their faith*^c. I think however the obser-

^a John ix. 6, 7.

^b Mark iii. 5.

^c Procopius speaking of them says: ὃν δὴ δύο ἐπειδὴ γυναιξὶν ἐπαίεαις πλησιάζειν ἔγνωσαν, ὑπὸ φθέρῃ καὶ τῷ λοιπὸν ἴαμεσαν. De bell. Vandal. L. i. c. 8.

vation of Æneas Gazæus, or rather the person in his dialogue, is something remarkable : he is one of the chief authorities quoted for the truth of the fact. He says, he used to think “ a fiddler “ could not play without his fiddle, nor “ a piper without his pipe ; but this strange “ and new sight made him change his “ opinion ^a.” For my part, I am still of the same mind. He says too, that upon seeing these men, “ he wonder’d not “ so much by what means they spake, as “ how their lives were preserv’d ^b ;” which seems to me as weak an observation, as the other is a merry one. To all this I must add, that it is a miracle wrought not in defense of the Christian religion in general, but for the establishment of one particular doctrine of it. Now to me it seems very strange, that there should be a miracle effected to support one par-

^a Εγὼ δ’ ἐπειδὴ μὲν ὡς ἀδύνατον αὐλητὴν ἐν ἀποείᾳ ἤν’ αὐλῶν αὐλητικὴν ἐπιδείκνυσθαι· ἀδύνατον δὲ κιθαρῳδὸν ἐν ἀποείᾳ ἢ κιθάρας μουσικὴν ἐργάζεσθαι· νῦν δὲ μετὰ τὸ δῆγμα ἀναγκάζει μετανοεῖν. Theoph. in fine.

^b Καὶ ἐκπλαγεῖς ἐθαύμαζον ἕχ’ ὅπως ἢ λόγον συνήρμωσαν, ἀλλ’ ὅπως ἐσώθησαν. Ibid.

ticular doctrine, which is revealed in the New Testament, greater than any to support the whole religion. Had any miracle really been perform'd by some of the orthodox bishops at the council of Nice, or any other council, where the doctrine of the Trinity was canvass'd and controverted; there would have been, as one may conceive, a much greater probability of success, for banishing the Arian doctrine entirely out of the Christian world. But we don't find, that the divine being thought any miracle then necessary, or made use of signs or wonders, to convince men of their errors, who already owned the truth of the Christian religion, the fundamental doctrines of which are clearly enough revealed in the holy scriptures. Yet at last here is one said to be wrought, more remarkable than any before it; which however we don't know had any good effect in converting the Vandals, or others, from their Arian notions. Had it been attended with this success, those who relate the fact would, I imagine, have certainly mention'd it.

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I DON'T assert, that these observations are of themselves sufficient to prove the falsity of the history ; but however they shew, that one may reasonably expect the greatest evidence in such a case, before assent is given. It is supposed indeed by some, that we have such evidence. Gro-tius calls the writers who assert it, *testes certissimos* ; and the learned Dr. Berryman thinks, that discrediting it is shaking the whole faith of history. *I am not insensible*, says he, *that miracles have often been pretended in these latter ages, which may be justly called in question, being both obscurely perform'd, and insufficiently attested. But this is related with such public circumstances, that I see not how we can discredit it, without shaking the whole faith of history, and rejecting all accounts of miracles besides the scriptural.* The Doctor needed not to have added, *besides the scriptural* ; for if he proves to any one, that by discrediting this story he shakes the whole faith of history, the scriptural miracles them-

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○ selves must in consequence be rejected; which are, as I apprehend, to be proved only by historical evidence. I could mention several miracles, which I fancy the Doctor would not believe, as well attested as this; and yet he would scarce allow the inference, that by so doing he shook the whole faith of history. The strange and surprizing virtues of the cross, mention'd above, have as many and good vouchers to support the credit of them, as the miracle we are speaking of; and yet I presume no protestant can believe those stories.

I WILL proceed now to consider the authors quoted by learned men to prove this fact. I begin with the most antient, Victor Vitenfis, an African bishop and confessor of those times. He tells us himself, that he wrote his treatise the sixtieth year after the Vandals had enter'd Africa, which, as Ruinart observes, they did in the year 427. He wrote then the history of the Vandalic persecutions in 487, about three years after
this

this fact is said to have happen'd. Now he says, that king Hunneric gave orders, " that the right hands and tongues of " many orthodox Christians should be cut " off. When this was done, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost they spake, " and continue to speak, as they used " to do before. If any doubts this, let " him go to Constantinople, and there " he will find one Reparatus a subdeacon, " who speaks very distinctly and articulately ; upon which account he is " very much respected in Zeno's court, " and held particularly in uncommon reverence by the empress^a." I give you his own words, as I shall the other authorities too, in the margin. Would any man of common sense take this to be a sufficient evidence in so miraculous a

^a *Linguas eis et manus dextras abscidisset. Quod cum factum fuisset, Spiritu Sancto præstante, ita locuti sunt, et loquuntur, quomodo antea loquebantur. Sed si quis incredulus esse voluerit, pergat nunc Constantinopolin, et ibi reperiet unum de illis, subdiaconum Reparatum, sermones politos sine ulla offensione loquentem ; ob quam causam venerabilis nimium in palatio Zenonis imperatoris habetur, et præcipue regina mira eum reverentia veneratur. L. v. c. 6. edit. Ruinart.*

case? One may, I think, very reasonably conclude, that Victor never saw these Christians, nor heard them speak; for if he had, he most certainly would have told us so, and not sent his readers to Constantinople to know the truth of it: nay, he does not so much as say, that he heard the story from any, who saw the thing done, or the persons themselves. That he believ'd it himself, I don't at all doubt; and so he did many other idle and ridiculous stories: but that he had any good grounds to believe it, don't at all appear from his relation. It is a dispute among the learned, where he liv'd, when he wrote this book. Cotelarius thinks he was in banishment in old Epire. Chifletius and Ruinart suppose he was at Constantinople. I can't but think from his way of telling the story, that he was not there at that time; for had he been there, he would have said: If any one doubts this, let him *come*, not *go*, to Constantinople; and *here*, not *there*, he will find, &c. Besides, if he was at Constantinople, he might certainly have seen and heard these Christians;

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and if he had, as I observ'd before, he ought to have told us this. 'Tis not improbable he might live a great way both from Typasa and Constantinople, and have heard only a slight report of the thing. So that I think, all that can fairly be collected from Victor Vitenfis is, that in his time there was in the place where he liv'd a current report, that some Christians, whose tongues had been cut off, could speak ; and that there was particularly one of them, named Reparatus, at Constantinople, which he believ'd to be true. That he should give his assent to such a report, without making any enquiry into the foundation of it, I don't at all wonder : for it was a confirmation of a doctrine he zealously espoused ; and he was besides a very credulous man, and much given to superstition. Ruinart says, that from him one may collect the pre-eminence of the church of Rome, the lawfulness of praying to saints, and making vows of celibacy. His credulity is sufficiently apparent from several other strange stories, for which he deserves credit as much, as in
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that before us. He tells us of a woman,
 “ who was hung up and tortured, till she
 “ expired. Then her executioners took
 “ her down quite dead ; but she after-
 “ wards came to life, and said that a young
 “ woman stood by her, and touch’d all her
 “ limbs, upon which she instantly re-
 “ cover’d *.” This young woman, who
 appear’d to her, I suppose, the papists will
 say was the Virgin Mary, who concerns
 herself much with saints here below.
 Now, I think, whoever believes the other
 story upon Victor’s authority, ought also
 to believe this ; and yet I fancy many
 honest Christians will not readily give
 into it. Before I leave Victor, I can’t
 help observing, that whereas he tells us,
 Reparatus was respected highly at court,
 and wonderfully reverenc’d by the em-
 press ; this good lady was, it seems, so
 much in haste to get rid of her husband,

* *Quam cum jam continuatione suspendii, avulsis humeris, etiam qui cruciabant conspicerent mortuam, deposuerunt omni parte exanimatam ; quæ postea retulit quandam sibi virginem additisse, atque tetigisse membra singula, et illico fuisse sanata.*

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that she suffer'd him to be buried alive^a. I shall say no more of Victor's authority, which I imagine you don't reckon sufficient to establish the truth of the story; but only beg leave to mention the great mistake at least of Baronius, who asserts, that Victor was an eye-witness of these things^b, which Victor does not say of himself. There is certainly great danger of being misled in following modern writers of ecclesiastical history, especially the papists. Many persons no doubt have believed this story from reading Baronius, who seems to bring so good authorities for it.

THE next authority I shall consider is that of Æneas Gazæus. Dr. Berryman says, *He relates in his dialogue, under the person of Axitheus, with what curiosity he had examin'd into the truth of this strange fact; and open'd their very mouths to make his observations with the*

^a Zonar. Annal. Tom. III. p. 44. edit. Basil.

^b Ad ann. 484. Non solum Victor, idemque gloria confessionis illustris, qui istæ omnia oculis vidit, et manibus contrectavit, posteris commendavit, &c.

more

more exactness. If this be true, there can be no objection against his authority from want of a strict enquiry into the affair, or from a too great credulity. It is said at the latter end of his book : “ I myself saw these men, and heard them speak; and wondring at the articulateness of the voice, I search’d for the organ of it, and discrediting my ears I examined with my eyes, and opening the mouth I saw that the whole tongue was torn from the roots ^a.” Baronius calls him an eye-witness, who lived at that time ^b : and other learned men have likewise asserted, that Æneas lived under the reign of Zeno ; but for no other reason, as appears to me, than that Axitheus, a person in his dialogue, is introduced saying, that he saw these Christians. Wolfius says of him in his epistle dedicatory,

^a Εἶδον ἔγωγε τὸς ἀνδρας καὶ λαλόντων ἤκουσα, καὶ τὴ φωνῆς τὸ ἑναρθεον. θαυμάζων τὸ τῆς φωνῆς ὄργανον ἐζήτην, καὶ τοῖς ὠπὼν ἀπὸ τῶν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἐπέτρεπον τὴν κείνην, καὶ τὸ σῶμα διανοίγων ὅλην ἐκ ριζῶν ἀνασπαδεῖσαν ἐθεώρην τὴν γλωττίαν. Sub fin.

^b Accipe alium rursus de visu testem, Æneam Gazæum, qui his temporibus floruit.

prefixed

prefixed to his edition of this dialogue :

“ I do not find it certain, who this
 “ author was, nor at what time he
 “ lived; but I think that probable,
 “ which Beatus Rhenanus has concluded
 “ from the history of the African perse-
 “ cution, related at the end of his book,
 “ that he lived about the time of Zeno
 “ and Anastasius; because he says he
 “ saw some of the African clergy speak-
 “ ing articulately, tho their tongues had
 “ been cut out by order of the tyrant.”

But this method of proving at what time
 Æneas liv'd is no better, than if any body
 should say, that Tully saw such things at
 such a time, and convers'd with such per-
 sons; because in one of his dialogues the
 elder Cato is introduced saying so of him-
 self. Æneas's Theophrastus is a dialogue,
 in which one Axitheus is introduced dis-

* De auctore vero quis fuerit, quoque tempore vixerit,
 certi nihil invenio; sed verisimile tamen existimo, quod
 Beatus Rhenanus ex historia persecutionis Africæ sub libri
 finem adducta collegit, eum circa Zenonis et Anastasii
 tempora floruisse; quod circa dialogi finem se vidisse
 Magnæ Libyæ sacerdotes ait, exsectis a tyranno linguis, ni-
 hilo secius verba pronuntiantes.

E

puting

puting with Theophrastus an Athenian philosopher about the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, in proof of which the story before us is brought as an unanswerable argument. Now at whatever distance of time Æneas might live, after the thing is said to be done, if he had heard of one Axitheus, who lived at that time, and firmly believ'd the story himself, he might introduce him saying what is there said. Tho I don't think we are obliged to allow even so much as this; for had he never heard of such a person, he might suppose this dispute to have happen'd at any time he pleas'd; and 'tis very probable, that both Axitheus and Theophrastus are only feigned names, suited to the characters of the disputants, and the part they were to carry on in that dialogue. As Æneas therefore did not doubt the truth of the story himself, he might make Axitheus, for setting the argument in a stronger light, affirm that he had seen these things; which is no uncommon thing with dialogists. I think therefore this may very fairly be supposed

supposed to be the case, till it be prov'd, that by Axitheus Æneas meant himself, and that he liv'd at that time. Or supposing he did live then, he might, for ought we know, be a great way both from TYPASA and Constantinople, and consequently never have seen these Christians; but yet believing the story, might bring a person into his dialogue affirming he had seen and heard them. From these observations I think it is very plain, that the authority of Æneas GAZÆUS is not sufficient to demand our assent to a story of this nature. To which I beg leave to add, that this Axitheus, whoever he was, is introduced as having seen several other strange things, which I can hardly believe, and I fancy they would not appear credible to the generality of readers. He tells us an odd story of a master, who had a blind scholar that strangely acquir'd sight. When the master lay on his death-bed, his scholar came to him, and desir'd him to do him all the service he could. The master told him, that in seven days he should be able to see; and then he died. Accord-

ingly on the seventh day the scholar receiv'd sight, and was not only able to see, but to read, which he did publicly to the great astonishment of the spectators; of which Axitheus says he was one^a. 'Tis pity he had not told us, whether the scholar was born blind; because if he was, his reading immediately upon gaining his sight, as the story in the original seems to represent, would have greatly heighten'd the miracle. He tells also another story of a child being rais'd from the dead by a good old man, whom he himself had seen. These stories I don't at all doubt but Æneas believ'd, and therefore makes Axitheus say he saw the facts.

* Ἄλλ' ἄγε ὅπερ πεδέσμαι· ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ μαθητὴς ἐ
 φαῦλ' ὑπῆρχον· ἀλλὰ τὸ τ' ψυχῆς καίλα' ἔχον, ἥ
 ὀφθαλμῶν ἐσῆρηντο· ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸν βίον μεταλλάττειν ἔμελ-
 λεν ὁ διδάσκαλ' οὗ, παρὲς τῶς· ὁ τυφλὸς ἐδῆτο βοηθεῖν αὐτῷ
 ὅπ' ἔχει. Ὁ δ' ἔφη, εἰ ἀληθὴς ἐμοὶ δόξα, εἶδε εὐμυρῆς,
 ἐβδόμῃ ἡμέρᾳ τ' ἄχλυσ' διαλυθείσης τετονὶ θεωρήσεις τ'
 ἥλιον· τοσούτον εἰπὼν ὁ γέρον ἀπέπνευσε. Καὶ ἐκ ἀπέβη
 ἄλλως αὐτῷ ἄλλ' ἢ ἡμέραι ἐπ' ἑ. Ὁ δὲ τυφλὸς ἐκείν' οὗ
 τέως χειραγωγέμεν' ἐξαίφνης ἐθαύμαζε τῷ ἡλίῳ τὴν ἀκτί-
 να, καὶ ἂν λαβὼν τὰ λόγια καὶ ἀναγνὺς δημοσίᾳ κατεπλήρη
 τ' διατήν.

I SHALL

I SHALL now consider the testimony of Justinian, which some perhaps may think very considerable ; because what he says of the story is in one of his laws, which may be consider'd as a public record. Thus Baronius says : *Non solum Victor posteris commendavit, sed et imperatoriæ quoque sanctionis testificatione res tanta meruit celebrari.* Dr. Berryman goes further, and says : *They were seen there [at Constantinople] by Justinian, who was afterwards emperor, and gave account how he had heard from themselves a relation of their sufferings.* Justinian's words are these : *Vidimus venerabiles viros, qui, abscissis radicibus linguis, suas pœnas miserabiliter loquebantur*^a. But this passage of it self is so far from proving the thing, that had not such a story been heard of before, one should scarce interpret *pœnas suas loquebantur* in this sense, *they related or gave an account of their sufferings.* They can

^a L. 1. C. de off. præf. præf. Afric.

necessa-

necessarily be said to signify no more, than that in a lamentable manner they shew'd what punishment they had undergone, which might be done without any articulate sounds or speaking. That *loquor* is frequently used in a metaphorical sense, every one knows: *Dolabella suis literis merum bellum loquitur*^a. So: *Oculi nimis arguti, quemadmodum animo affecti simus, loquuntur*^b. And in the epistle to the Hebrews we read: *ὁ αἰὼς αὐτῶν ἐν αἰσθηταῖς*^c. Thus we say in English: *Their looks speak their misery*. So that from this passage of Justinian, consider'd by it self, it does not appear that there ever happen'd any such miracle. Nothing else will follow, but that Justinian had seen some venerable Christians, who having had their tongues cut out from the roots for their orthodoxy, in a melancholy manner shew'd how they had been punish'd. And indeed if he meant any thing more in that place (which yet I shall not deny)

^a Cic. L. IX. Attic. ep. 13.

^b Id. De Leg. L. I. c. 9.

^c Chap. XI. v. 4.

'tis much he should not enlarge upon it, and in a pompous or marvelous style, which is very frequent both in his Constitutions and his Novels, set forth the miracle, as a proof of the doctrine of the Trinity; at least that he should not represent it as a very wonderful miracle. But he does not so much as give it that name, tho just before he had mention'd his speedy conquest of Africa as a sort of miracle^a; which, if his meaning was what is commonly suppos'd, seems scarcely consistent in a person of his turn of mind; for he had himself an intemperate zeal for that doctrine. I call that an intemperate zeal, when persons are for bringing others over to their opinions by punishments and anathemas. And this sort of zeal was

^a Multas quidem et antea a Deo meruimus largitates, et innumerabilia circa nos ejus beneficia confitemur, pro quibus nihil dignum nos egisse cognovimus. Præ omnibus tamen hoc, quod hunc omnipotens Deus per nos pro sua laude et pro suo nomine demonstrare dignatus est, excedit omnia mirabilia opera, quæ in seculo contigerunt, ut Africa per nos tam brevi tempore reciperet libertatem. *I hope you'll read the whole proœmium for a specimen of his style.*

in Justinian, as will appear to any one, who reads the title in the Code, *De summa Trinitate*, or that *De Hæreticis et Manichæis*. To all this I think it proper to observe, that even supposing the words should be taken in that sense, which those who plead for the miracle are desirous of, *pœnas suas loquebantur*, they related their sufferings; yet notwithstanding this authority of Justinian is not such, as one would desire, or expect, in a case of this nature. Even in this sense the words do not necessarily imply, that he ever heard those men speak, or examin'd into the truth of the story; but only that he saw such persons *who spake*, that is, *who were used to speak*, and give an account of their sufferings. Nay, and I may add further, that should Justinian have design'd the sense commonly pleaded for in this expression, yet he was but an infant when the thing happen'd^a, and therefore must

^a Justinian was born in the year 481 or 482: for Belarmin places his death in 565; and Zonaras tells us, that he was 45 years old when he ascended the throne, and reigned near 39 years. Zonar. Ann. Tom. III.

probably

probably be very young when he saw them, and so might easily be imposed upon, had any ill use been made of the calamity of these confessors by some artful persons. So that in whatever sense the words are taken, there can be no great stress laid upon this passage of Justinian in proof of the miracle.

I PROCEED therefore to consider the account, which Marcellinus Comes has given us of the matter, whom likewise Dr. Berryman mentions. *Marcellinus Comes, says he, who was Justinian's chancellor, has left it likewise under his hand, that he saw 'em there himself; and has added this considerable circumstance, that one of the confessors treated in this manner had all his life been dumb, until the execution of this barbarity. This circumstance is indeed very considerable, as the Doctor observes. Marcellinus tells us, that king Hunneric order'd the tongue of a young man to be cut out, who had been both deaf and dumb from his birth, and that soon after he spake, and gave glory*

F

to

to God. Then he adds, that he saw several of these sufferers at Constantinople, who spake, tho their tongues were cut off. It is very remarkable, that no other historian should mention this young man, besides Marcellinus; for the miracle is much greater, than that of the others, that one both deaf and dumb from his birth, after his tongue was cut out, should not only make articulate sounds, but be able to give an account of his faith in Christ, and profess the doctrine of the Trinity, which he had never heard. Hunneric had not surely the same design in cutting out this man's tongue, which he had in cutting off the rest. In them, I suppose, he design'd to prevent the spreading their doctrine; but his was cut

Hunnericus unius catholici adolescentis vitam a nati-
vitate sua sine ullo sermone ducens linguam præcepit ab-
scindi, idemque mutus, quod sine humano auditu Christo
credens didicerat, mox præcisa sibi lingua locutus est, glo-
riamque Deo in primo vocis suæ exordio dedit. Denique
ex hoc fidelium conuberno aliquantos ego religiosissimos
viros, præcisis linguis, manibus truncatis, apud Byzantium
integra voce conspexi loquentes. Chronic. Theodorico et
Venantio coll.

out

out only to put him to pain, and terrify others. It may be worth observing, that Marcellinus does not say, he saw this young man himself. But to pass that circumstance, the rest of the account seems liable to the same exception, as that of Justinian. For the words *conspexi loquentes* don't necessarily imply, that he saw and heard them, when they spake. They may intimate no more, than that he saw some of those *speaking persons*, or who were reported to speak. If he had design'd the former sense, he might have put it out of all doubt by saying, *audivi loquentes*. Besides, the same objection lies against him, as against Justinian, with respect to time; for he places this barbarous action in the consulate of Theodoricus and Venantius; that is in the year 484, and brings down his *Chronicon*, in which he relates it, to the fourth consulate of Justinian, or the year 534, fifty years after; so that 'tis very likely he was but a boy when he saw them, and consequently easy to be impos'd upon, in case any such thing was design'd. I may

add to this, that he appears to have been a very credulous man, and fond of miraculous stories ; as a proof of which I send you one, that he tells of what happen'd, when Monaxius and Plinta were consuls, at the birth of Valentinian the younger.

“ Several towns and villages were then
 “ destroy'd by an earthquake. And Je-
 “ sus Christ our God appear'd plainly
 “ from a cloud over mount Olivet, near
 “ Jerusalem. Then great multitudes of
 “ both sexes of the neighbouring coun-
 “ tries being affrighted, as well from what
 “ they saw, as what they heard, and be-
 “ lieving in Christ, were baptized ; upon
 “ which there immediately shone very
 “ bright a cross, imprinted on the coats
 “ of all those, who were baptized.” Mo-

“ Monaxio et Plinta cons. Valentinianus junior apud Ravennam, patre Constantio et Placidia matre, vi nonas Julias natus est. Multæ Palestinæ civitates villæque terræ motu collapsæ. Deus noster Jesus Christus semper ubique totus super montem Oliveti, Hierosolymæ vicinum, sese de nube manifestavit ; multæ et tunc utriusque sexus vicinarum gentium nationes, tam visu quam auditu perterritæ atque credulæ, sacro Christi fonte ablutæ sunt, omniumq; baptizatorum in tunicis crux Christi salvatoris divinitatis nutu extemplo impressa refulsit.

naxius

naxius and Plinta were consuls in the year 419, which must have been many years before Marcellinus was born ; and yet, as you see, he tells this story roundly, as if he no ways doubted the truth of it, or suppos'd that his readers would, and therefore he produces no vouchers for it. After this I need not trouble you with the stories of God's revealing the place, where St. Stephen's body was ^a ; nor of St. John the Baptist appearing, and discovering where his head lay ^b. You will certainly conclude, that the man, who believ'd these things, might believe any thing ; and that it is not at all strange, if such an one should be imposed upon.

THE next author, whose account of the story I shall consider, is Procopius. Dr. Berryman says, *Procopius of Cesarea, who liv'd in their time, and was himself a senator of Constantinople, speaks of it, as a matter that was public and*

^a Honorio et Theodosio vi coff.

^b Vincomalo et Opilione coff.

well known in that place, and has left his account of the fact under his own hand. All this is true, and yet his authority is not sufficient to make one believe any miracle in the case. His account is this : “ Hunneric cut out the tongues of
 “ many quite from the roots, who being
 “ alive to my time at Constantinople
 “ spake articulately, without the least
 “ inconvenience from this punishment.” It is certainly very remarkable, that Procopius does not say one word of his having seen or heard these men himself, or that they were in being when he wrote his history, but rather the contrary. From his way of telling the story, it looks as if he had only heard formerly that there were such men, and that he suspected no fraud in the matter, but believ’d it on common fame. As he lived at the same time with Marcellinus, that is in the reign

Ἰ Παλλῶν δὲ καὶ τὰς γλώσσας ἀπέτεμεν ἀπ’ αὐτῆς φά-
 ρυγγος, οἱ ἐν πρὸς ἐμὲ φερόντες ἐν Βυζαντίῳ ἐχρῶντο
 ἀκραιφνῆ τῇ φωνῇ, ὥδ’ ὅπως ἐν ταύτῃς δὴ τῇ πικρῆς ἐπαί-
 δανόμενοι. De bell. Vandal. L. 1. c. 8.

of

of Justinian, and was a senator of Constantinople, which gave him an opportunity to inquire thoroughly into the fact, and yet only says, that some of these persons were living to his time ; this seems to be a farther confirmation of what I observ'd before, that in all probability both Justinian and Marcellinus must have been very young, when, as they tell us, they saw them. But now that Procopius should take up with such a story upon hearsay, I don't at all wonder ; for from other parts of his writings he plainly appears to have been a very credulous and superstitious man. I can't help judging a man credulous and superstitious, who is very fond of omens and dreams, as so many prophecies of future events ; and such events, as one can hardly suppose the divine being would so often interpose in. His omens of victory are very many and frequent. Even the plays or diversions, which boys use in the streets or ways, when an army is marching, signify to a man of his sagacity and cunning a future victory.

victory. This happen'd more than once^a. He tells us too, that much fire shone on the tops of the soldiers spears, so that they seem'd to be burning; there were not many (he says) who saw it, but those who did were very much astonish'd, tho perfectly ignorant of what it fore-boded. The same thing a great while after happen'd to the Romans in Italy, and then they were convinced by former experience, that victory was portended^b. Another time he tells us, God plainly shew'd them, that they should conquer their enemies, by discovering a spring to them in a dry ground^c. But I will not trouble you with any more of his ridiculous stories. From what has been said, I fancy, you will not think his authority very good in the case before us.

THUS I have consider'd the testimonies of all those, who are thought to have

^a De bell. Vandal. L. i. c. 21. De bell. Goth. L. i. c. 10.

^b De bell. Vandal. L. ii. c. 2.

^c De bell. Vandal. L. i. c. 15.

liv'd about the time of this miracle; or who themselves are suppos'd to have seen the persons, on whom it was wrought. And I presume I have made it appear, that not one of them, considering the evidence given, can be esteem'd a competent witness of the thing.

If the writers then, who liv'd at the time of these confessions, have not said enough to establish the story; those who are allow'd by all to have liv'd after, especially if it appears that they also were persons of the same character and turn of mind, cannot be reckon'd of authority sufficient. There are four such cited by Baronius, Dr. Berryman, and other learn'd men, whose testimonies I must now consider. And I believe you will see they are such writers, as one should hardly credit in a thing of this nature, had they liv'd at the time when it was done, and said no more than the former.

G

I WILL

I WILL begin with Evagrius, a writer of the sixth century. Baronius, as Spanheim informs us^a, is very fond of him, and says, he is the first ecclesiastical historian, who was truly orthodox; which however, I think, in this case adds no weight to his authority. And the character which Spanheim himself has given of him, is certainly a very true one: That he was inclined to superstition, fond of relics, and the miracles attributed to the wood of the cross, and others equally silly and fictitious. I shall not trouble you with any of his idle stories in order to shew his credulity, of which there are ample proofs in his history; but only observe with respect to the matter before us, that he has it only from Procopius, whom he cites for it^b: and therefore his authority can stand for nothing, after I

^a Hist. Christ. secul. vi. p. 1136. edit. fol.

^b Speaking of Procopius, he says: Τὸ αὐτὰ τὰ καὶ Βανδίου γεγράφοντι μέγιστα τέλειται, καὶ μνήμης ἐς αἰὲς διασωζομένης ἀξία, ἀ λείπον ἔργου. L. IV. c. 14.

have

have already prov'd, that the relation of Procopius himself is of no weight. But it is worth remarking, that he affirms Procopius says, he saw and was present with these men, speaking as if they had suffer'd nothing at all^a. If you look back to the passage I have transcribed from Procopius, you will see he says no such thing. And as to the law in the Code, which he likewise cites, he is guilty of a mistake; for he calls it an edict of Justin, whereas it is Justinian's^b.

I THINK I need say no more of this writer, and therefore shall proceed to Victor Tununensis. Dr. Berryman says of him, *Victor Tunun. an African bishop, who liv'd soon after them, as being both bishop and confessor in the reign of Justinian, alleges the testimony of the royal city, that is Constantinople, where their*

^a Τέτρας καὶ τῇ δὲ αὐτῇ ἀναβαλεῖν [Vales. would have it read ἀναλαβεῖν] ὁ Προκόπιος ἔφη πρὸς τὴν βασιλεως γνομῆς πόλιν αὐτοῖσι διαδραῖντας, ἐντυχὲν τε αὐτοῖς ἰσχυροῖς μηδὲν πεπονθόσι φθιγγομύοις. Ibid.

^b ὅν καὶ Ἰουστίνου διάταξις μνημονεύει. Ibid.

○ *bodies were inter'd.* As Victor liv'd in the reign of Justinian, he had sufficient opportunity of inquiring into the fact from those, who were contemporary with these confessors, if he was not himself, and were inhabitants of Constantinople. But instead of this he contents himself with a story, that such persons lay buried there^a. Such authority as this will surely have very little weight with any man of judgment. Besides, it appears from other instances, that Victor was a very credulous man, and fond of miracles. He tells another odd story of a miracle in defense of the Trinity. When an Arian was baptizing a person, instead of saying, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, he said; I baptize thee in the name of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Ghost: upon which the water instantly

^a *His words are these:* Zenone Aug. cos. Quos confessores, quod linguis abscissis perfecte finem ad usque locuti sunt, urbs regia attestatur, ubi corpora eorum jacent. Pag. 4. edit. Scalig.

disappear'd,

disappear'd ; and the vessel, which before contain'd it, was broke ^a. And to mention no more, he tells us how St. Barnabas himself shew'd where his body lay, with the Gospel of St. Matthew which he had himself transcribed ^b.

THE next authority to be consider'd is that of Gregory the Great, who saw an old bishop, who saw the men. Here is an authority worth considering, that of a pope, who had it from a bishop. The bishop told Gregory, that he saw their mouths, when they spake without tongues, and that they cried out to every body : *See, we speak without tongues* ^c. This bishop, whoever he was, must have been a very old man, when he told this to Gregory. It was about the year 578,

^a Patritio et Hypatio coff.

^b Post consulatum II Longini : Corpus sancti Barnabae apostoli in Cypro, et Evangelium secundum Matthæum ejus manu scriptum, ipso eodem revelante, inventum est.

^c Ὅτις ἐμαρτύρει ἄνευ γλώττης τὰ ἐκείνων σώματα λαλῶντα ἑωρακέναι· ἀνοίγοντες γὰρ τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα ἔλεγον πάντων· Θεάσασθε ὅτι γλώττης μὴ ἔχοντες λαλῶμεν. Dial. L. III. c. 32.

when

when Gregory went to Constantinople *. These men, it is suppos'd, went thither in the year 484, or soon after. Let us suppose that some of them liv'd there thirty years, that is to the year 514; tho from several circumstances in the former accounts, and the manner in which the writers express themselves, I can't think they did: but supposing this, and that the bishop was fourteen years old when he took notice of them, he must have been seventy eight when Gregory convers'd with him, tho it was soon after his coming thither. All this indeed may possibly be; but to say the best of it, it looks very suspicious, especially if we consider some other circumstances of the relation. For it seems to me very unaccountable, that after thirty years time they should have any occasion to open their mouths, and appeal to the spectators, whether they spake without tongues; and that the venerable bishop should acquaint Gregory with nothing more remarkable concerning

* See the second account of his life, in the third volume of his works.

them, after such a number of years, which this miracle had continued. Besides, as we know nothing of this bishop, or what his character was, his authority in such a case can, I think, merit little regard. And I am sure the pope's does not deserve more regard than his, howsoever credulous he might be. For Gregory seems prepared to believe every miraculous thing, which was told him, provided it had a tendency to establish orthodoxy. Never was any man more fond of wonders. In his dialogues there is a great number of stories, which none but a very superstitious man could relate with seriousness. He often tells us from abbots and other great men such things, as, I hope, will never be believ'd in a protestant country. I will send you one to divert you a little, and to give you a specimen of the wisdom of this *Gregorius Magnus*. It is an account of something very odd, which happen'd in Valeria, and was told him by Valentinus. A holy and pious priest was buried by the church, near which was a sheep-pen; and it happen'd, that the very spot

spot he was buried in was the way to it. One night, when the clergy were at their devotions in the church, a thief comes, takes one of the sheep, and goes away with it upon his shoulders; but when he came to the grave of this priest, he was stop'd all on a sudden, and could not go one step further: then he takes the sheep from his neck, and would have let it go, but was not able to take his hand from it. So this thief (says Gregory) who was unwilling to be seen by the living, was wonderfully stop'd, and invisibly held by one dead. In the morning the clergy having finish'd their devotions, came out of the church, and were astonish'd to see a man standing in that manner, with a sheep in his hand. He confess'd the thing to them, then they pray'd for him, and in answer to their prayers he was loos'd. Is not this a pretty story for the great bishop of Rome to relate? And ought not his authority to be respected, and have a regard

Ἐθαυμάσω τοίνυν τούτων ὁ κλέπτης ὁ ᾧδε. ὅτι ζώντων
 διακηδύνει μὴ συλόμενος, ὅτε ᾧδε νεκρὸν ἀνελάττω ἐκεί-
 τῷτο. Dial. L. iii. c. 22.

paid

paid to it in all narrations of miraculous facts? It is hardly worth remarking, that Gregory is mistaken, tho a pope, when he says the Vandalic persecution was in Justinian's time; these men lost their tongues in Zeno's time, many years before Justinian was emperor. This is an error of his own, I suppose, not of the bishop; and shews with how little thought he gave into the story.

THE last authority I shall consider, is that of Isidore, archbishop of Sevil; who, Dr. Berryman tells us, *was contemporary with Gregory, and a person of too much learning and judgment to be deceiv'd in so important a fact, which was not a century before him.* Men of great learning and sound judgment in other things are, as I have observ'd before, often deceiv'd in matters of this kind; and frequently make less inquiry, than persons of inferior abilities in other respects, into such facts, which if true, would confirm a favourite opinion. Isidore never saw any one of those confessors himself, nor does

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he say he had the account from any person, who had seen them; so that 'tis probable he had it only, as we have it, from historians of that time, or from a tradition. And this I imagine he would credit, without making any inquiry into the foundation of the tradition. I can't help thinking thus, because he was certainly, notwithstanding his learning and judgment, a very credulous man. He tells the story of St. Barnabas, revealing where his body lay^a; and that other which Victor Tununensis relates of the water which disappear'd, when an Arian was going to baptize a person^b; and many such ridiculous tales, as if he firmly believ'd them. I can't forbear telling you, what he says happen'd under Theodosius the younger. The Devil, it seems, at that time appear'd to the Jews in Crete, under the form of Moses, and promised to lead them through the sea, without being wetshod, to the land of promise. They believ'd him, and fol-

^a Chron. sub Zenone.

^b Ibid. sub Anastasio.

low'd him ; by which means many were drown'd, and those who were sav'd, were immediately converted to Christianity^a. He that believ'd this story, may very well be suppos'd to believe the other at first hearing.

THUS I have consider'd all the authorities, which I have met with, quoted by learned men to support this miracle. And now to sum up the evidence in one short view : Victor Vitenfis, the first of them, who wrote three years after the fact, does not say that he ever saw any one of these sufferers, and mentions but one that he knew of at Constantinople. As to Æneas Gazæus, we can't be certain whether he liv'd near the time, or not ; or whether Axitheus in his dialogue was any more than a feigned person. Two of the other three, who are said to have liv'd before the death of these men, must in all probability have been very young, when they saw them, and consequently are not much to be

^a Ibid. sub Theodos. jun.

relied on in their account of the affair ; which of itself is to me an objection of very great weight : besides, neither the words of Justinian, nor of Marcellinus Comes, necessarily imply that they ever heard them speak ; nay, those of Justinian, in the most obvious sense, don't express any miracle. And Procopius seems to have taken the story upon hearsay. As to those who liv'd after these sufferers, their account is still less to be depended upon. Evagrius had his account from Procopius, with this difference, that he makes him say he saw them, which Procopius does not affirm himself. Victor Tununensis refers us only to a story, that such persons were said to be buried at Constantinople. Gregory's account is yet further from the time, and only at second hand from a bishop, who must have been very young when he saw them. Isidore, the last evidence, seems to repeat what he says from tradition. To this must be added the character of these writers ; that it plainly appears they were men of great credulity and superstition, and very fond of

of miracles. This, I presume, is a fair and just representation of the matter. And now I may leave it to you, or any considerate man to determine, how far short these writers fall of the character given them by the learned Grotius, who calls them *testes certissimos*; or by Dr. Berryman, who styles them *competent witnesses*. Nor can I think with the Doctor, that the faith of history will receive any great shock by discrediting this story.

BUT should you now inquire, what evidence I would expect in this case; I will tell you as briefly as I can, tho I have in some measure done it already. As I would suppose the miracle to be wrought immediately upon that inhuman action of Hunneric, I should expect to hear of some wonderful effect it had upon the enemies of these confessors. And after they came to Constantinople, the royal seat of the empire, I should expect a much further and more certain account of the fact, and to hear they made a better use of their time, than to shew themselves as a public

blic spectacle ; that they were zealous in
 preaching up the doctrine of the Trinity,
 and appeal'd to this miracle for the truth
 of it ; and that this had a very confide-
 rable effect in destroying the Arian heresy,
 and giving a spread to the orthodox faith.
 But we hear nothing of this, or of any
 other good end that was answer'd by it,
 except barely to these confessors them-
 selves in the recovery of their speech.
 And if nothing more was intended, than
 their private benefit, by this wonderful ap-
 pearance of a divine power ; one might
 equally expect, that their hands, which
 were cut off, should likewise have been
 restor'd to them, and then we might have
 had the account from themselves.

AFTER all this you will perhaps ask
 my opinion about the foundation of this
 story ; for it is not probable that the
 whole thing should be an entire fiction,
 and such a piece of history have its rise
 from nothing, but the bare imagination
 of zealous historians. I will therefore in
 a few words give you my conjecture of
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the matter. I think then, it can't be denied that king Hunneric was an Arian, and persecuted in a most cruel and barbarous manner those, who believ'd the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. In this persecution, in order to hinder them from spreading their notions, either by their voice or writings, he order'd the hands of several of them at least to be lopt off, and their tongues to be cut out ; tho some of them might possibly lose only a part of their tongue, after which they might be able to speak without a miracle. It could not be long before the report of this barbarous action reach'd Constantinople, and such of these persons, who had an opportunity for it, might afterwards go from Typasa thither, where they knew they should meet with kind treatment, having suffer'd for so good a cause as the orthodox faith. It must soon be noised about Constantinople, that some of those confessors, whose tongues had been cut out by order of Hunneric, were come thither, and could speak as well as before. And as all were prepossessed with an account

count of the fact, 'tis easy to suppose this
 pass'd immediately for a proof of the Tri-
 nitarian doctrine; and that people were for
 the generality glad to believe and think,
 that God had interposed in so wonderful
 a manner in behalf of an opinion, which
 they believ'd themselves, and for which
 others had suffer'd in so inhuman a man-
 ner. And thus I think it very probable,
 that most persons readily believ'd the
 thing from common fame, without seeing
 or examining whether the whole tongue
 was cut out from the roots, or only a part
 of it. This, as I take it, is no improbable
 account of the affair. That men may be
 able to speak, after they have lost part of
 their tongues, I hope you won't deny.
 There is a clergyman now living in
 Gloucestershire (as it is reported) who
 does the duties of his office; tho some
 years ago he had the misfortune to have
 part of his tongue cut out by rogues,
 who came to rob his house. And it may
 be worth observing, that Victor Vitenfis,
 the first reporter of the story, and who
 wrote three years after this cruel action
 of

of Hunneric, uses only the words *linguas* *abscidisset*, without *radicitus*, which is added by Justinian, and some of the following writers.

THUS I have given you my opinion concerning the foundation of the story. It may perhaps be objected: that this is to suppose those confessors guilty of a fraud, in endeavouring to make men believe they had lost their whole tongues, and spake miraculously, when neither of these was true; and that 'tis not probable men so wicked would suffer to that degree in a good cause. Now you can't think me obliged to answer every difficulty, which may possibly be started in such an affair. I took upon me to shew you, that the authorities hitherto produced in proof of the story appear to me not sufficient to support the credit of it; but did not undertake to account for the method, by which it pass'd for a miracle. However, since I have now touch'd upon that, I will give you my present thoughts as to this objection. It seems to me most probable,

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bable, that not many of the sufferers long surviv'd their punishment, and that very few of them ever got so far as Constantinople. But if only two or three, who went thither, had so much of their tongues left, as would enable them to speak, this might be a sufficient foundation for the story without their promoting it, any further perhaps than by not contradicting it.

BUT should you still insist upon it, that these men must be guilty of a fraud, in permitting others to believe their speaking was miraculous, when they themselves knew the contrary ; I can only say, that tho' you should think so, yet you can't deny it possible for them to think otherwise. I am firmly persuaded there have been many persons, who have thought it lawful not only to connive at, but even to spread a story, which they knew was not true, when they imagin'd the belief of that might be a means of bringing people to believe something else, which they thought was true, and necessary to be believed

liev'd as an article of their faith. And this certainly is worse, than a bare permitting men to continue in an error about a matter of fact.

BUT if this way of accounting for the story be not thought sufficient; it has been observ'd before, that in all probability it must have been several years after the fact, before either Justinian, Marcellinus, or Gregory's bishop saw those men; who are the only persons that affirm they did see them, except Axi-theus, of whom I have said enough already. And in this time it is not unlikely, that some impostors, pretending to be of the number of those sufferers, might get a trick of doubling back or contracting their tongue in such a manner, as to make it appear, at least to those at some distance from them, as if it was cut off, in order to raise compassion, and get money from the spectators. This seems to me the more probable, because I have been told of a person, who some years ago plaid the same trick at London, pre-

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tending

tending he had been a slave in Turkey, where he had met with that cruel treatment; but whether he had the art of speaking articulately, when his tongue was so doubled, my friend could not inform me. I can't but think the bishop's story in Gregory looks pretty much like this. He tells us nothing which they said, but only this: *See, we speak without tongues.* This seems to carry in it more the air of impostors, than confessors for religion, especially at such a distance of time from the fact. Had he acquainted us with any serious discourse spoken by them, or that they preached in defense of the Trinity, it had been much more plausible. And those two, who were afterwards detected to have been guilty of immorality (if there be any truth in that part of the story) might be of this number, and, after they were discover'd, pretend they had lost their speech, as the likeliest means to get off.

BUT should it still be said, that allowing the possibility of a cheat with respect
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to their tongues, how could they counterfeits the loss of their hands? In answer to this let me remark, that none of the eye-witnesses mention their hands, except Marcellinus. And if they were conceal'd, or wrapt up in clothes, the attention to their speaking would very probably divert the spectators, and take them off from any great regard to that circumstance.

BUT whether I have hit upon the true foundation of the story, or not, I can't doubt but you will agree with me, that the evidence for it is not sufficient to give it the credit of a real miracle. And the late *Rabbit-story* among ourselves is a flagrant instance, how capable mankind is of being deluded by imposture.

I BELIEVE, Sir, by this time you are sufficiently tir'd; but if you are, you must thank yourself for it, who put me upon this task. I shall be very glad to know, whether you agree with me in my opinion

tion of the fact, which you may now
very well judge of, seeing I have fairly
laid all the evidence before you. I shall
at present add no more, than that I am,

not a hypocrite. And if they were con-
fessed, or wrapped up in clothes, the ac-
tion to their speaking would very

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate

humble servant.

But whether I have hit upon the true
foundation of the story, or not, I can't
doubt but you will agree with me, that
the evidence is sufficient to give

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it the credit of a real miracle. And the
the Rabbi's story, among ourselves is a
significant instance, how capable mankind is
of being deluded by imposture.



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must
thank you for
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Yours truly
J. H. P.
17th. June 1781
17th. June 1781
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